

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended): A method of accumulating and retrieving information related to one or more information sources in a search space, said method comprising:

providing central program code at a central computer; said central program code being adapted for maintaining a central database of data records, for accessing the information related to said information sources stored in said central database, and for comparing said data records with said information related to said information sources;

recognizing communication between said central program code and remote program code at at least one remote terminal; said remote program code being adapted for monitoring user activity of at least one user accessing any information source in the search space wherein the monitoring occurs irrespective of whether a uniform resource locator (URL) accessed in the search space is the same as the URL of said central program code, for collecting monitored data related to said user activity, and for transmitting said monitored data to said central program code, wherein said remote program code monitors and transmits said user activity without requiring said at least one user to access a search engine or any particular web site, and the monitoring and the transmitting is independent of the at least one user's access to any search engine, and further wherein the user does not need to access the search engine or the particular website for the monitoring to be performed;

supplementing, at said central computer, said data records in accordance with said monitored data to provide an augmented central database;

responsive to a request for information from said at least one user, identifying candidate response information related to said information sources at said central computer;

comparing contents of said augmented central database with said request and with said candidate response information at said central computer; [[and]]

customizing information retrieval results for said at least one user based on said identifying and said comparing; and

as a result of said identifying and said comparing, transmitting, to said remote program code at said at least one remote terminal, data concerning one or more of said information sources which contain information relevant to said request, so as to progressively tailor said customized information retrieval results for said at least one user and provide said customized information retrieval results to said at least one user.

2. (currently amended): An information retrieval system for accumulation and retrieval of data related to one or more information sources in a search space, said system comprising:

remote program code at at least one remote terminal; said remote program code being adapted for monitoring user activity of at least one user accessing any information source in the search space wherein the monitoring occurs irrespective of whether a uniform resource locator (URL) accessed in the search space is the same as the URL of said central program code, for collecting monitored data related to said user activity and to each of said information sources

accessed by said at least one user, and for transmitting said monitored data, wherein said remote program code monitors and transmits said user activity without requiring said at least one user to access a search engine or any particular web site, and the monitoring and transmitting is independent of the at least one user's access to any search engine, and further wherein the user does not need to access the search engine or the particular website for the monitoring to be performed; and

a central computer having central program code receiving said monitored data transmitted from said remote program code ; said central program code being adapted for maintaining a central database of data records, for accessing information related to said information sources, and for comparing said data records with said information related to said information sources;

wherein said central program code supplements said data records in accordance with said monitored data to provide an augmented central database,

said central computer identifying candidate response information related to said information sources in response to a request for information from said at least one user, comparing contents of said augmented central database with said request and with said candidate response information, customizing information retrieval results for said at least one user based on said identifying and said comparing, and transmitting, to said remote program code at said at least one remote terminal, data concerning one or more of said information sources which contain information relevant to said request so as to progressively tailor said customized information retrieval results for said at least one user and provide said customized information retrieval results to said at least one user.

3. *(Cancelled)*

4. *(Cancelled)*

5. *(Cancelled)*

6. *(Cancelled)*

7. (previously presented): A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said monitored data comprises implicit data, including data selected from the group consisting of queries and actions taken after receiving responses to said queries, said implicit data being added iteratively to said central database to form said augmented central database so as to progressively tailor information retrieval results for said at least one user based on said implicit data.

8. (previously presented): A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said monitored data comprises explicit data, including user input in response to one or more queries from said central computer, said user input including data selected from the group consisting of user profile information and user feedback concerning information retrieval results, said explicit data being added iteratively to said central database to form said augmented central database so as to progressively tailor information retrieval results for said at least one user based on said explicit data.

9. (previously presented): A method as claimed in claim 7, wherein said monitored data further comprises explicit data, including user input in response to one or more queries from said central computer, said user input including data selected from the group consisting of user profile information and user feedback concerning information retrieval results, said explicit data

being added iteratively to said central database to form said augmented central database so as to progressively tailor information retrieval results for said at least one user based on said implicit data and said explicit data.

10. (previously presented): A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein:

said remote program code is adapted for monitoring user activity of a plurality of users at a respective plurality of remote terminals, for collecting said monitored data related to said user activity and to one of said information sources accessed by each of said plurality of remote terminals, and for transmitting said monitored data to said central program code;

said supplementing comprises supplementing said data records based on said monitored user activity at said plurality of remote terminals to provide said augmented central database; and

said transmitting to said remote program code comprises progressively tailoring said information retrieval results for said at least one user based on said user activity at said plurality of remote terminals.

11. (previously presented): A method as claimed in claim 10, wherein said monitored data includes a plurality of user profiles, and wherein said central computer groups contents of said augmented central database based on said plurality of user profiles so as to tailor said information retrieval results for said at least one user based on ones of said plurality of user profiles most closely matching a user profile of said at least one user.

12. (previously presented): A method as claimed in claim 11, wherein said information retrieval results include an identity of at least one other user with whom said at least one user then can communicate to obtain further information.

13. (previously presented): A system as claimed in claim 2, wherein said monitored data comprises implicit data, including data selected from the group consisting of queries and actions taken after receiving responses to said queries, said implicit data being added iteratively to said central database to form said augmented central database so as to progressively tailor information retrieval results for said at least one user based on said implicit data.

14. (previously presented): A system as claimed in claim 2, wherein said monitored data comprises explicit data, including user input in response to one or more queries from said central computer, said user input including data selected from the group consisting of user profile information and user feedback concerning information retrieval results, said explicit data being added iteratively to said central database to form said augmented central database so as to progressively tailor information retrieval results for said at least one user based on said explicit data.

15. (previously presented): A system as claimed in claim 13, wherein said monitored data further comprises explicit data, including user input in response to one or more queries from said central computer, said user input including data selected from the group consisting of user profile information and user feedback concerning information retrieval results, said explicit data being added iteratively to said central database to form said augmented central database so as to progressively tailor information retrieval results for said at least one user based on said implicit data and said explicit data.

16. (previously presented): A system as claimed in claim 2, wherein:

said remote program code is adapted for monitoring user activity at a plurality of remote terminals, for collecting said monitored data related to said user activity and to one of said information sources accessed by each of said plurality of remote terminals, and for transmitting said monitored data to said central program code;

said central program code supplements said data records based on user activity at said plurality of remote terminals to provide said augmented central database; and

said central computer progressively tailors said information retrieval results for said at least one user based on said network activity at said plurality of remote terminals.

17. (previously presented): A system as claimed in claim 16, wherein said monitored data includes a plurality of user profiles, and wherein said central computer groups contents of said augmented central database based on said plurality of user profiles so as to tailor said information retrieval results for said at least one user based on ones of said plurality of user profiles most closely matching a user profile of said at least one user.

18. (previously presented): A system as claimed in claim 17, wherein said information retrieval results include an identity of at least one other user with whom said at least one user then can communicate to obtain further information.

19. (previously presented): A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said search space comprises the Internet, and media programming comprising at least one of television programming and radio programming, so that said at least one user can access said media programming as a result of said information retrieval results.

20. (previously presented): A system as claimed in claim 2, wherein said search space comprises the Internet, and media programming comprising at least one of television programming and radio programming, so that said at least one user can access said media programming as a result of said information retrieval results.

21. (currently amended): A method of accumulating and retrieving information related to one or more information sources in a search space, said method comprising:

providing central program code at a central computer; said central program code being adapted for maintaining a central database of data records, for accessing the information related to said information sources, and for comparing said data records with said information related to said information sources;

recognizing communication between said central program code and remote program code at each of a plurality of remote terminals; said remote program code being adapted for monitoring user activity of each of a plurality of users accessing any information source in the search space wherein the monitoring occurs irrespective of whether a uniform resource locator (URL) accessed in the search space is the same as the URL of said central program code, for collecting monitored data related to said information retrieval activity, and for transmitting said monitored data to said central program code, wherein said remote program code monitors and transmits said user activity without requiring said plurality of users to access a search engine or any particular web site, and the monitoring and the transmitting is independent of the plurality of users' access to any search engine, and further wherein the user does not need to access the search engine or the particular website for the monitoring to be performed;

supplementing, at said central computer, said data records in accordance with said monitored data to provide an augmented central database;

responsive to a request for information from at least one user, identifying candidate response information related to said information sources at said central computer;

comparing contents of said augmented central database with said request and with said candidate response information at said central computer; [[and]]

customizing information retrieval results for said at least one user based on said identifying and said comparing; and

as a result of said identifying and said comparing, transmitting, to said remote program code at at least one of said plurality of remote terminals, data concerning one or more of said information sources which contain information relevant to said request so as to progressively tailor said customized information retrieval results for at least one user and provide said customized information retrieval results to said at least one user.

22. (currently amended): An information retrieval system for accumulation and retrieval of data related to one or more information sources in a search space, said system comprising:

remote program code at each of a plurality of remote terminals; said remote program code being adapted for monitoring user activity of a plurality of users accessing any information source in the search space wherein the monitoring occurs irrespective of whether a uniform resource locator (URL) accessed in the search space is the same as the URL of said central program code, for collecting monitored data related to said user activity and to each of said

information sources accessed by said at least one user, and for transmitting said monitored data, wherein said remote program code monitors and transmits said user activity without requiring said plurality of users to access a search engine or any particular web site, and the monitoring and the transmitting is independent of the plurality of users' access to any search engine, and further wherein the user does not need to access the search engine or the particular website for the monitoring to be performed; and

a central computer having central program code receiving said monitored data transmitted from said remote program code; said central program code being adapted for maintaining a central database of data records, for accessing information related to said information sources, and for comparing said data records with said information related to said information sources;

wherein said central program code supplements said data records in accordance with said monitored data to provide an augmented central database,

said central computer identifying candidate response information related to said information sources in response to a request for information from said at least one user, comparing contents of said augmented central database with said request and with said candidate response information, customizing information retrieval results for said at least one user based on said identifying and said comparing, and transmitting, to said remote program code at at least one of said plurality of remote terminals, data concerning one or more of said information sources which contain information relevant to said request so as to progressively tailor said customized information retrieval results for at least one user and provide said customized information retrieval results to said at least one user.

23. (new): A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said customizing comprises at least one of (a) ordering said information sources by utilizing monitored user information and comparing the monitored user information with statistical data for a search result, and (b) adding matching degree information based on at least one of said information sources and a user profile, and changing a search ranking based on a degree of matching.

24. (new): A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said customized results further comprise information identifying voting users who voted for at least one result of said customized results.